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THE BENEFITS OF MEDICAL MARIJUANA: STUDIES AND MEDIA ATTENTION

As medical marijuana programs continue to be legalized in states throughout the country, the academic, scientific, and medical communities have begun publishing studies demonstrating the medicinal benefits of marijuana. Below, please find four studies on medical marijuana conducted by leading institutions and an example of the media attention that has resulted from such studies. Please note that the accompanying studies are not meant to serve as an exhaustive compilation of all of the studies in this emerging field of research.

A study conducted by Wayne State University Medical School in 2013 focuses on the growing body of research supporting the proposition that the use of medicinal marijuana is associated with a decline in the use of prescription drugs, including opiates. This study found that medical marijuana patients consistently reported using marijuana to substitute or wean off prescription narcotic drugs. In the study, all of the interviewed patients reported having reduced their overall prescription drug use, especially the use of opiates, by using medical marijuana.¹

Another study, conducted by the American Medical Association (Attached as Exhibit #1) examined the association between state medical cannabis laws (i.e. the legalization of medicinal marijuana) and opioid mortality rates. This study, which analyzed data from all 50 states, concluded that the states that enacted medical cannabis laws had a 24.8% lower mean annual opioid overdose mortality rate compared with the states without medical cannabis laws.²

A widely cited 2012 joint study published by the University of Colorado and the Institute for the Study of Labor (Study Available Upon Request) analyzed large national data sets of self-reported marijuana use by high school students in the years leading up to and following the enactment of medical marijuana laws. The researching economists concluded that their results were not consistent with the hypothesis that the legalization of medical marijuana caused an increase in the use of marijuana and other substances among high school students.³

Using surveys of 1,098,270 adolescents between 1991 and 2014, Lancet Psychiatry published a 2015 study (Attached as Exhibit #2) that analyzed data to determine (1) whether marijuana use was higher overall in states that passed a medical marijuana law up to 2014; and (2) whether the risk of marijuana use changed after passage of medical marijuana laws. The results of the study suggest that passage of state medical marijuana laws do not increase adolescent use of marijuana.⁴

The results of these - and many other studies - are not being ignored by the mainstream media. Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN's Chief Medical Correspondent, published an article in 2013 titled "Why I Changed My Mind on Weed" (Attached as Exhibit #3). In his article, Dr. Gupta apologized for his previous article from 2009 titled "Why I Would Vote No on Pot" stating that he jumped to conclusions before doing adequate research and was "too dismissive of the loud chorus of legitimate

¹ Peters II, David C., *Patients and Caregivers Report Using Medical Marijuana to Decrease Prescription Narcotics Use*, HUMBOLDT J. OF SOC. REL., WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE (2013).

² Bachhuber MD, Marcus A., *Medical Cannabis Laws and Opioid Analgesic Overdose Mortality in the United States, 1999 - 2010*, J. AMER. MED. ASSOC. INTERNAL MEDICINE (2014).

³ Anderson, D. Mark, *Medical Marijuana Laws and Teen Marijuana Use*, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AND THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF LABOR (2012).

⁴ Hasin, Deborah S. et al., *Medical marijuana laws and adolescent marijuana use in the USA from 1991 to 2014: results from annual, repeated cross-sectional surveys*, THE LANCET PSYCHIATRY, June 16, 2015, [http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpsy/PIIS2215-0366\(15\)00217-5.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpsy/PIIS2215-0366(15)00217-5.pdf)

patients whose symptoms improved on cannabis.” Dr. Gupta went on to produce a documentary showing the benefits of medicinal marijuana that won the 2015 Alfred I duPont Award for Journalism from Columbia University.⁵

These studies provide a glimpse into the benefits of medicinal marijuana and the questions researchers are exploring in this new area of study. As previously mentioned, this list of studies is not exhaustive and we are continuously keeping abreast of new research and discoveries. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any additional questions. We are always happy to provide

⁵ *Weed: A CNN Special Report by Dr. Sanjay Gupta* (CNN television broadcast 2013), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrVXRZY1_x0.